

# ABORIGINAL BUSINESS: CELEBRATED IN ALBERTA

MARCH 2011

## 20th ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction – a great honour for entrepreneurs, small businesses, corporations and individuals in the province. Finalists in 10 categories will be acknowledged at a gala presentation on March 4, 2011 at the Edmonton Marriott at River Cree Resort in Enoch.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Alberta Region is proud to once again be a sponsor of two Alberta Business Awards of Distinction: the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction, awarded to a mainstream company that is a leader in its corporate policies regarding Aboriginal relations and practices; and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction that honours an Aboriginal-owned business working to improve the lives of its employees and peoples.



The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal communities and entrepreneurs are able to make the best possible use of government support and services in exploring economic opportunities. Improving economic opportunities for Aboriginal people is a priority for the Government of Canada. Not only is robust economic development in Aboriginal communities vital to Canada's future prosperity, it is an effective way of improving the well-being and quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Learn about this year's INAC-sponsored award finalists in the following stories of dedication, vision and love of industry.



## SUNCHILD E-LEARNING COMMUNITY

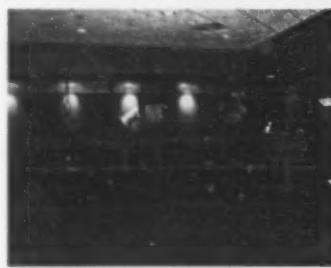
### Innovative Learning Equals Positive Results

"Education is the key to unlocking the doors of success." This mantra has been proven time and time again, and Sunchild E-Learning Community is at the forefront of adaptive, electronic learning methods aimed specifically at Aboriginal youth.

Recognizing the gap that exists in high school graduation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, Sunchild E-Learning CEO Martin Sacher has dedicated himself to reducing it through innovative, flexible programs individually tailored to fit the student.

It is a strategy that is benefiting everyone involved.

Sunchild E-Learning is a not-for-profit program delivered independently of the Sunchild First Nation



First graduates from Chief Chiniquay E-Learning centre in Morley

administration through its recently expanded state-of-the-art school. Fresh from an \$11 million expansion, the school houses students from kindergarten to Grade 12 on First Nations land 40 kilometres northwest of Rocky Mountain House.

School principal Martin Sacher worked with Board Chairman Nelson Daychief and staff to launch the electronic learning program in 2000, recognizing the need for an initiative like this.

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Eagle Feather Award finalist

## SUNCHILD E-LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada



# Canada



# UNITED PROTECTION SERVICES Securing Positive Futures

Started in 1989, United Protection Services Inc. – a subsidiary of publicly-traded United Protection Security Group Inc. – has grown exponentially along with the security industry as a whole. Nine branch offices are now in operation across Western Canada.

In 1996 the company developed an Aboriginal-focused affiliate, United First Nation Corporation (UFNC), realizing a win-win situation was at hand. It aligned industry needs, Aboriginal communities and the structure and expertise of United Protection Services Inc.



Vice-President, Aboriginal Affairs Earl John (r) receives service award

"Our philosophy allowed us to see our clients, communities and shareholders as partners, and they empower us to be leaders in our field," said Vice-President of Aboriginal Affairs Earl John. "They work closely with us to develop some exceptional employees who are able to advance rapidly."

Today, UFNC is one of the largest employers of identified Aboriginal workers in Alberta. With the assistance of Security Officer Career College, UFNC has hired and trained over 600 Aboriginal people from approximately 30 First Nation and Métis communities across the western provinces and Ontario in the past 10 years.

In the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo alone, the company employs over 250 Aboriginal security officers through partnerships with three First Nations and two Métis organizations.

Through UFNC, United Protection Services provides a wide spectrum of services across its operating area. These include uniformed guards, mobile patrols, alarm response, private investigations, access control systems and remote video monitoring.

The company believes strongly in individual and community empowerment and involvement. It has worked with a number of communities, through training and coordinated efforts with community leaders to establish local security services. Once up and running, daily operations management is transferred to the community.



Security Officer Shirley Adams monitoring screens on-site

Through Security Officer Career College, the company runs 15 Aboriginal community-based training programs annually. Over the past five years, both hiring and retention rates have been over 80 per cent. In partnership with the college, UFNC's six-week long training program

teaches recruits life skills, conflict resolution management and physical deterrence. Participants graduate with a Security Officer Basic certificate and all the safety tickets required by industry.

As John points out, until this past year no training was required to become a licensed security officer in Alberta. "Our training programs have provided quality far beyond other companies in the past. Our clients recognize the value we provide."

Employment with UFNC is seen as a stepping stone for Aboriginal youth, an opportunity to pursue their dreams with training and experience behind them. Those completing the training program are expected to stay with the company for a minimum of 12-18 months. Most continue beyond that, and a number have taken on leadership roles within their communities. Others have moved on to careers with police forces, the Correctional Service of Canada and other private investigation/security companies. UFNC also hires from these institutions, with experienced security officers mentoring those just starting out.



Security Officer Rozella Sandrik working on-site

In wages alone, UFNC employees will contribute over \$7 million to their communities this year. For John, it is probably the most satisfying aspect of his work. "I always think of the positive role models our employees provide for the younger community members."

I also think of the tangible benefits of those wages. The material benefits to our youth, our elders – the community as a whole. Our employees don't just contribute materially to the well-being of their community. They bring pride in a job well done, knowing their communities are safer and better places to live."

For the company, that in itself is the best reward of all.





# ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

## *A Chosen Journey Continues to Bring Results*

The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) has been a leader in providing Aboriginal banking services and innovations across Canada and throughout Alberta. This is RBC's "chosen journey" and it has benefited all parties equally well.

With over 4,500 employees in Alberta, RBC has an extensive presence in the province. RBC is working hard to increase the number of self-identified Aboriginal employees – currently around two per cent – through a number of initiatives. The Aboriginal Workforce Strategy is one; annual scholarships of \$4000 for four years of post-secondary education for Aboriginal students is another.

To date, RBC has awarded over \$1 million nationally through its Aboriginal Students Award Program for continuing education studies. In Alberta, post-secondary and high school institutions have received nearly \$300,000 in sponsorships and donations to organizations promoting enhanced Aboriginal employment, education and skills training.

Another innovative program the bank has launched is its Royal Eagles employee resource group. It provides networking opportunities, mentoring and support, assistance with recruitment and retention, acts in a liaison role with communities, and enhancement of cultural awareness internally.

Human resources and employment are only one way RBC is proactive. Capital support for Aboriginal community projects in Alberta has totalled \$5 million to the Frog Lake First Nation community centre and over \$500,000 towards a truck wash facility and equipment for the Loon River Cree First Nation. Nationally, the figure was nearly \$40 million expended towards building community infrastructure.

The company continues to make loans to businesses and individuals less onerous through agreements with national and provincial Aboriginal organizations to promote strong communities and economic empowerment. These include the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association, the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. Regional Aboriginal economic development officers were assisted through support from the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers annual general meeting and conference.

RBC has engineered a number of impressive firsts. It was the first financial institution to open an on-reserve branch, fully staffed by Aboriginal employees. It led in creating an on-reserve mortgage program that did not require federal funding as a guarantee. In 2009, its pioneer on-reserve housing program was available to 58 communities. This past year RBC became the first financial institution to offer telephone banking services in Inuktitut and Cree.



Performers at RBC's National Aboriginal Day celebration



RBC and Deh Cho Band staff with RBC-financed helicopter



Dancers at RBC's National Aboriginal Day celebration

Ever mindful of demographics that show the increasingly important role Aboriginal peoples will play in Canada's future development, RBC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Assembly of First Nations to address shared strategies aimed at improving capital access, community and social development, and employment and procurement.

Some of the concrete initiatives resulting from this working agreement include the Leasehold Mortgage Program, providing greater flexibility in financing the purchase or construction of new homes and a Remote Banking Program that makes it easier for First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples to access personal banking services.

RBC contributes to Aboriginal business and individual self-sufficiency across Alberta and nationally through ongoing support of cultural and social events, training programs, job fairs and improved water resources. Dialogue to build relationships that are mutually respectful and share a common vision of improvement for and by all parties is continuous.

As RBC President and CEO Robert Nixon said recently: "We are consulting with Aboriginal communities and their leaders to help create economic opportunities that benefit not only Aboriginal peoples but the Canadian economy as a whole."

The importance RBC attaches to the ongoing relationships it develops through its chosen journey is evident and is manifested in its innovative successes.





# PTI GROUP INC.

## Building Proactive Relationships at Every Level

One of the largest fully integrated suppliers of remote workforce accommodations and hospitality services in North America, PTI Group Inc. (PTI) has facilities in the Northwest Territories and every province in Western Canada, with company headquarters and two its manufacturing facilities based in Edmonton. PTI employs nearly 2,800 people throughout its operations.

PTI was founded in 1977 and has had a significant presence in Alberta ever since.

Its largest concentration of operations is located within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB), serving the Athabasca oil fields. From the beginning, the company has incorporated Aboriginal companies and workers in its field and manufacturing operations.

Currently PTI has six open camp facilities within the RMWB staffed in part through an innovative, proactive venture with a collective of five Métis locals amalgamated under the umbrella Buffalo Métis Catering Ltd. This year alone PTI hired 150 new Aboriginal employees, with a 94 per cent retention rate thus far.

"We're proactively engaging the people who live here," said Chief Executive Officer Ron Green. "Our desire is to provide a legacy that is more than just providing financial resources, but one that enhances lives and career opportunities for people who live in the communities in which we work."

To this end, PTI has initiated a number of formal Aboriginal recruitment campaigns throughout the province and across the country. Its Aboriginal Relations and Human Resources departments work closely with local band/tribal council human resources staff as partners to identify qualified candidates, conduct formal interviews and facilitate orientation of new employees. Local Aboriginal human resources staff are involved throughout the recruitment/hiring process. Formal partnerships are in place with seven Aboriginal organizations and more are being established.

Training programs for Aboriginal workers and Aboriginal youth interested in a career in the manufacturing or hospitality sector are numerous, and specifically focused. PTI covers the cost of all safety courses – including Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, Food Safe, First Aid and CPR – for those requiring this training.

The company offers cooking apprenticeships through its accommodation facilities, and a variety of trade apprenticeships at its manufacturing



Accommodation facility at Beaver River

facilities. Once enrolled, tuition and materials costs are reimbursed and, based on eligibility, the employee's salary may be topped up in accordance with Employment Insurance entitlement.

Partnering with the Rupertsland Institute Métis Training to Employment Program, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and Alberta Employment and Immigration, PTI is piloting the innovative Aboriginal Camp Cooking Program at its Mariana Lakes open camp. Ten Métis students have now been trained in camp specific cooking techniques at the fully operational facility. PTI has committed to full-time employment and further apprenticeship training for all the graduates. With a tremendous success rate, a second phase is anticipated soon.

Recognizing the significance of integrated, open dialogue and planning with local Aboriginal communities, the company is very supportive of activities that improve community wellness and augment close working relationships.

PTI sponsors a host of celebratory and educational Aboriginal events, in addition to hot breakfast and lunch school programs. The company has donated computers to community schools and wherever possible ensures local community businesses are a priority regarding subcontracting opportunities.



Apprentice carpenters at work

PTI contributes to a number of local, provincial and national charities on a regular basis, recently stepping up to the plate for Santas Anonymous. The organization provides toys at Christmas for those who might not otherwise receive any. Learning of the charity's funding shortage, PTI employees and management raised \$21,000 in a single day to ensure the program remained solvent.

Even more importantly PTI has established focus areas for its

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Students from the Aboriginal Camp Cooking Program

philanthropic efforts, concentrating on areas where it's felt the most meaningful differences can be made. Currently they are targeting food programs, low income housing initiatives and youth programs.

PTI's commitment to harmonized, respectful relationships with its Aboriginal partners and the greater community is apparent, and ongoing. Delivering comprehensive Aboriginal awareness workshops to employees, and including an Aboriginal Relations component to its new employee orientation training sessions reflects this. It is paralleled by the company's contributions to society as a whole.



## TRANSCANADA CORPORATION

### Working Cooperatively with Its Neighbours

Based out of Calgary, TransCanada is a leading energy infrastructure company in North America, with a strong focus on pipeline and power generation opportunities. Incorporated in 1951, the company has over 250 operations in all three countries, seven provinces and 31 states. Nearly half of its 4,000-strong workforce is based in Alberta, and the majority of its identified Aboriginal workers are based there.

The company has been lauded for the diversity of its workforce and procurement procedures since it started operations. It aims to achieve a more representative workforce while promoting advancement opportunities. In 2010, TransCanada was chosen as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, Alberta's Top Employer and one of Canada's Top Diversity Employers.

Achieving these accolades has been helped by the early development of an Aboriginal Relations Policy in order to foster mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal partners across its areas of operations. It includes status and non-status Indians, Métis, Inuvialuit and Inuit companies, contractors and employees, and is anchored by five main tenets:

TransCanada:

- respects the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, recognizing the importance of the land and is committed to building relationships based on trust;
- works cooperatively with communities to identify operational impacts on community values and needs, and find mutually acceptable solutions and benefits;



Employee at Winchell Lake site

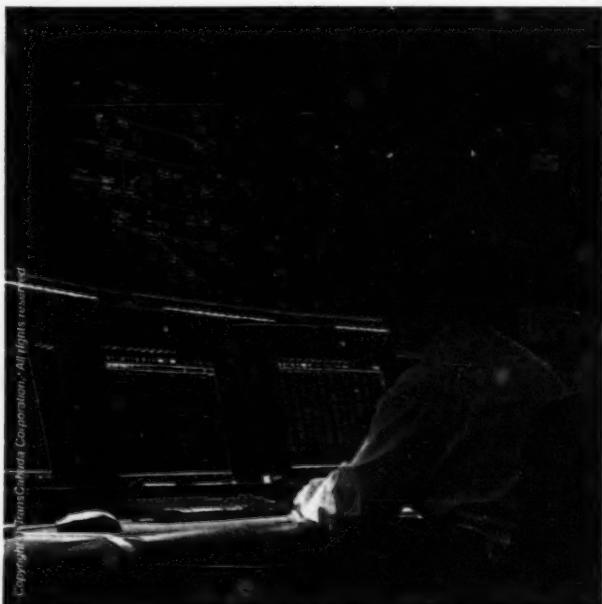
- works to create short and long term employment for Aboriginal peoples within their area of operations;
- supports learning opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to develop skilled, well trained employees and build capacity within communities; and
- respects the legal and Constitutional rights of Aboriginal peoples while recognizing its relationships are separate and different from those of the Crown.

All of these principles are integrated into day-to-day aspects of planning and operational activities. They direct guidelines and policies for Aboriginal economic development, procurement, employment and training, community support and ongoing liaison. In all these areas TransCanada has proven itself to be a leader among Alberta-based corporations working in the natural resources field.

The company has nearly 30 years of involvement in building Aboriginal economic development partnerships. Through ongoing open communication, relationship building and honouring commitments, TransCanada has established significant, lasting relations with the communities in which it is involved. In 2009 alone, the company committed over \$50 million in contracts with Aboriginal businesses and communities.

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*Internal operations for gas pipeline control*

Training, employment and support for Aboriginal employees are operational cornerstones. TransCanada provides up to 100 per cent subsidies for education advancement. It provides Aboriginal awareness training for all employees, conducts workshops on best practices for enhanced hiring of qualified Aboriginal candidates and assists and supports post-secondary Aboriginal students. The company works closely with technical institutes to promote student awareness of hiring opportunities while providing tutoring, mentoring and industry awareness regarding potential future employment.



*Bison pound site excavation*



*CarSeland cogeneration plant*

TransCanada ensures community participation and capacity development in its planned operations by continually involving the community as a whole. The corporation sponsors the ongoing Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources program that focuses on shared collaboration in previewing project sites and environmental assessments. The latest program involved members of the Maskwacis



*Montana First Nation schoolchildren at archaeological site*

Cree, Ermeskin Cree, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana Cree and Samson Cree; all 26 participants have since secured positions within their communities, with TransCanada's environmental contractors or with another energy company.

Through regional Aboriginal liaison staff who work continually with community members – additional Aboriginal engagement employees are involved in all capital projects – TransCanada maintains open relationships with communities to meet needs and address concerns.

When community elders emphasized the importance of harvesting traditional medicinal plants prior to project development, information sharing, dialogue and accommodation happened to ensure their needs were met. It's one small example of the importance TransCanada Corporation places on continuous, open and respectful dialogue with Aboriginal neighbours throughout its operations.



*Welder working on natural gas pipeline*

 **TransCanada**  
In business to deliver





Eagle Feather Award finalist

# THE SAWRIDGE GROUP OF COMPANIES

***"Your Natural Choice" for Local Accommodation***

The Sawridge Group of Companies bucked a trend as the economic downturn was beginning in 2008 by reinvesting in its core businesses, renovating, rejuvenating and re-branding hotels in Edmonton and Peace River.

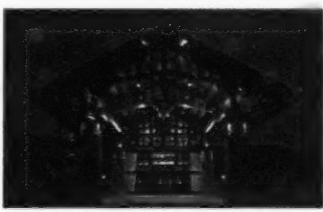
Sawridge also re-developed flagship properties in Slave Lake, including converting a large portion of its Slave Lake Mall to government offices and a public library, and made improvements to the Slave Lake Travel Centre. These significant investments are expected to yield favourable returns as the economy continues to recover.

The unique structure of the Sawridge Group of Companies is reflected in the complete separation of economic operations versus band administrative functions. The owners – all members of Sawridge First Nation – are represented by a five-person Board of Trustees (senior members) whose chair sits as a non-voting observer at bi-monthly Board of Director meetings.

The Board itself is made up of seasoned professionals from the business community. This ensures the company remains focused on long-term plans regardless of changes that might occur within the First Nation.

Sawridge has worked hard to create a series of hotels (five in total now) that reflects its brand and the pride it takes in the success of the Aboriginal-owned and operated gathering places.

Art and décor are chosen with care, reflecting Aboriginal culture and heritage within a mainstream environment. The high quality, comfortable yet refined furnishings and service is reflected in all aspects of the business.



*Entrance to the Fort McMurray property*

From promotions and marketing to natural interiors, from menus using Cree descriptors and dishes that reflect traditional Aboriginal food preparation to using guest toiletries and amenities supplied by an Aboriginal company, Sawridge has placed its unique stamp on its facilities.

The company and its properties are certainly being noticed. Both industry associations and guests have heaped accolades on the Sawridge properties which have won the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association's Employer of Choice three years running and in 2010 captured the Pinnacle award for Canada's Regional Hotel Company of the Year.



*Guests at Walter's Restaurant in the Jasper Park property*

Local awards where the company's facilities are based include the 2010 Business of the Year Award in Slave Lake and the 2009 Best Hospitality Business in Fort McMurray.

Perhaps even more impressive is its Edmonton hotel's restaurant/lounge *Creations* being named one of the Top Ten New Restaurants in Canada in 2009. Last year it was cited with a Wine Spectator award of excellence.

All the company's hotels have achieved high marks through the Hotels of Canada Association's Green Key Eco-Rating Program. The Program



*Interior of the Edmonton South hotel*

is a graduated rating system designed to recognize hotels, motels and resorts that are committed to improving their environmental and fiscal performance. Four of the company's hotels have been awarded with four Green Keys while the fifth has been awarded with three Green Keys.

"Within our operating areas, we are successfully establishing a unique identity that promotes familiarity and comfort for our clientele. At the same time, through planned upgrades and attention to detail, we're attracting critical acclaim and loyal guests in our Jasper and Edmonton facilities particularly," said Chief Executive Officer John MacNutt. "This success positions us to diversify our brand into other ventures."

As a result, the Sawridge Group is moving beyond its 38 years of success in the hospitality industry and is exploring stand-alone and joint ventures in aviation, commercial real estate and health care.

This commitment to environmental stewardship, excellence of service and providing a unique, pleasurable hotel experience is apparent. The company's ongoing financial support and active involvement in events and fundraising activities that benefit communities in which it operates is equally important, while ensuring long-term sustainability for those it represents.





Eagle Feather Award finalist

# ASENIWUCHE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## Working Together in Unity

In little over a decade, the Aseniwuche Development Corporation (ADC) has gone from revenues of \$50,000 to \$8 million in fiscal year 2009/2010. This explosive growth has been paralleled by a commitment to the land, ecological values, and care and concern for the environment as a whole. As important is the well-being of the people who live and work on the land and those ADC employs.



*Labourers/slashers on TMX Anchor Loop, Jasper National Park*

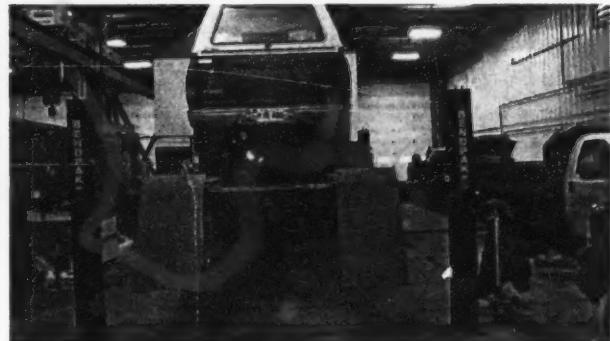
ADC was a finalist for the Eagle Feather Award two years ago. Again this year the corporation has been recognized for the quality of its initiatives, its continual community development and improvement, and its economic successes.

ADC is the largest employer of Aboriginal workers in the Grande Cache area, with upwards of 80–90 per cent of the members of the Grande Cache Cooperatives and Enterprises working for it. The corporation provides environmental impact and mitigation planning – as well as labour and heavy equipment – for area resource companies such as EnCana Corporation, Talisman Energy, Conoco Phillips, Ledcor and Grande Cache Coal Corporation.

ADC operates the only custom fabrication welding shop in Grande Cache. In March 2010, ADC opened a mechanical division that provides vehicle/equipment repair and maintenance to industry and the private sector alike.

Both of these success stories had humble beginnings. They are a direct result of strong leadership, the collective vision to recognize and fill niches and the willingness to take chances.

Aseniwuche Welding Services started in 2007 with a journeyman welder and six trainees. The initial revenue was \$500,000. Today the welding business has expanded to include a paint booth and generates revenues of just under \$3 million annually. There are two full-time journeyman welders, five sub-contracted journeyman welders, and numerous apprentices with various years of completed study/training, all of them from the ongoing training program in place.



*Hoist in new mechanical facility*

The mechanical division is showing the same growth potential in less than a year of operations. Already two fulltime mechanics, a 3rd year apprentice and a 1st year apprentice are keeping busy as clientele increases, in part through the reputation ADC has forged for quality, reliable work in all aspects of its business.



*Mechanic shop – 1st year apprentice working on a vehicle*

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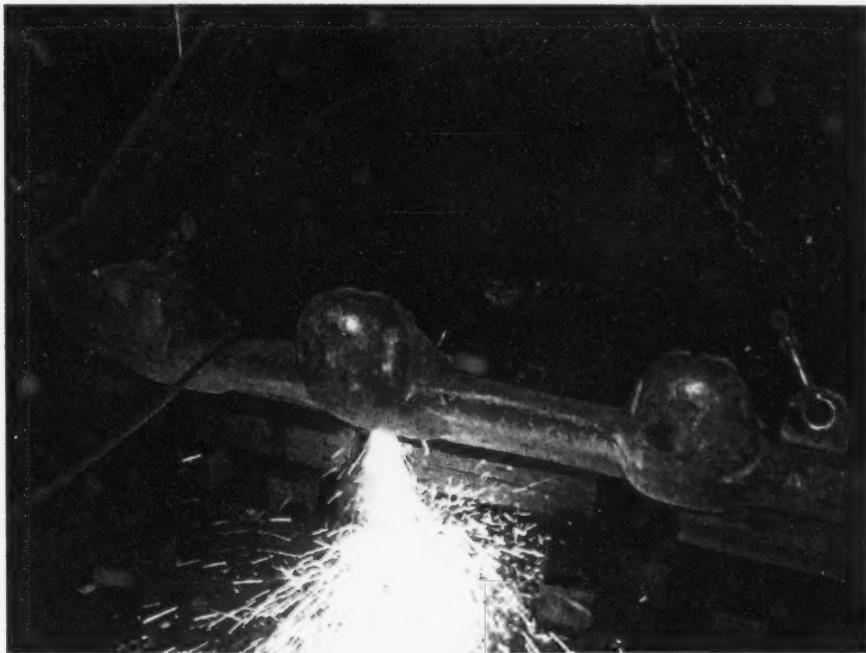
Both divisions operate from a 15,000 square foot complex the corporation bought in 2008.

While the business side of things is robust, ADC has not lost its focus on the community, its peoples and the greater world around them. ADC is a regular and generous supporter of the Aboriginal Youth Council, the Elders Council, Ducks Unlimited, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Willmore Wilderness Foundation to name a few. It also sponsors 40 AIDS/HIV-impacted children in Ethiopia through World Vision.

As well, ADC has begun developing working camps throughout local traditional territory that will serve a twofold purpose: to integrate government and industry clients at a grassroots level and to provide an educational, cultural and recreational experience to the general public.

The corporation's philosophy recognizes its role as "caretakers of the earth." To this end, respect and value of and for the land and its resources are always at the forefront of planning and projects.

Outside-the-box thinking has expanded its initial service/labour role considerably and has led to initiatives like the welding and mechanical divisions, as well as ventures like the development of a Site Awareness Guide for employees and contractors alike. It identifies sacred and cultural sites throughout local traditional lands and is complemented by the innate knowledge of the First Nation members and corporation employees.



3rd year apprentice welding on Bucket for GCCC

As President and CEO David McPhee explains: "Our employees have the historical and cultural geographic knowledge that resource companies need. When they recreate a stream bed they know what it used to look like, because their grandfather used to fish there. And they'll do it right, so their grandchildren will be able to fish there too."

No doubt their careful stewardship will make that happen.



Welders and apprentices with repaired and repainted bucket





# LESSER SLAVE LAKE MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD.

## Overcoming Adversity to Succeed

As the old adage goes, "adversity makes you stronger." Lesser Slave Lake Management Services Ltd. (LSLMS) has seen some major setbacks since it was incorporated in 2003 but has bounced back more vital than ever. Renewal and continuous improvement has been the company's credo throughout the peaks and valleys.



*Employees and equipment near Slave Lake*

A limited partnership formed by the Driftpile Cree, Kapawe'no, Sawridge, Sucker Creek and Swan River First Nations, LSLMS has a mandate to provide employment and training while promoting cooperation and unity. Preservation of culture and environment is the third key goal of the partnership.

The company operations are concentrated on vegetation control, hazardous tree removal, right-of-way clearing and environmental assessment.

From its inception the corporation suffered several years of near dormancy with little or no revenue generation. Beginning in 2006, it started to right itself through the purchase of a company that had certified workers able to train LSLMS employees. In the process, the company arranged an earned buyout that netted a profit of over \$200,000 after initial outlay. The company was assisted in its rejuvenation by the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council, which also provided the financing necessary to purchase several key pieces of equipment. This brought in contracts and generated a much-needed revenue flow.

A partnership with industry stalwart Atco Electric (a previous Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction winner) developed

employment, training and certification streams. This allowed LSLMS workers to get the training and hours necessary to qualify as utility tree trimmers and utility tree workers. The arrangement was mutually beneficial to both parties and gave the company the boost it needed to be competitive and develop other contracts.

It still wasn't smooth sailing though. Two years ago a fire destroyed a critical piece of company equipment and a major contractor went bankrupt. LSLMS was without the ability to generate expected revenue and unable to collect on nearly \$100,000 worth of completed work.

"For a less determined group that might have been the end of it," said President Roland Twinn. "Both of these events happened right at the start of the international debt crisis. It was touch and go because we'd been through so much. It's a real credit to the partners, our employees and the management team that we persevered and are where we are now."

LSLMS is projecting record revenues and profits this year, in part through a recently signed contract for brush clearing and road building with Pembina Pipeline, but also from its earned reputation for professional work and on-time job completion. Going from zero revenue five years ago to over \$16 million forecast for 2011 is a stellar accomplishment. The revenue increase has injected over one-and-a-half million dollars in wages into the communities, and paid over \$2 million to First Nation entrepreneurs and companies working as sub-contractors.



*The Pembina pipeline project*

Twenty-six employees now work for LSLMS. Of these, 21 were trained by the company. At peak operating periods the company has employed nearly 100 people. Through careful corporate planning and tax structuring, employees who live on-reserve earn tax-free income.

The company is eager and confident to expand into other business ventures such as hazardous materials remediation and power line construction. LSLMS works closely with First Nation economic development officers to disseminate contracting opportunities, forge partnerships with industry and generate economic prosperity for their communities.

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LSLMS is active at community events, career fairs and other employment/industry trade shows. The company aims to generate employment interest among Aboriginal youth and show what perseverance and planning can do to improve the quality of life in the Slave Lake area. LSLMS is committed to community improvement and will distribute corporate profits equitably among the partners free of restrictions, for this express purpose. After all the trials, the future looks bright for LSLMS and the people it represents and serves.



Office employee Frieda Draney



LSLMS employees with ATV



# COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NATIVE DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

With the national office and nearly one-fifth of the economic development officers across the country located in Alberta, the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) is well represented in the province.

Now entering its 21<sup>st</sup> year, the Council has nearly 500 members across the country. Its mission is "to be the leading authority on Aboriginal community economic development." CANDO provides resources and research information, hosts an annual conference that enables networking and idea-sharing, publishes newsletters and the Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development, and continues to lead in the education, training and certification aspects of Aboriginal economic development officers. The organization serves as their voice for furthering the work they do: for and with band councils, Aboriginal economic development agencies and various levels of government.

CANDO is Aboriginal-controlled, community-based and driven by its members. Its role in furthering Aboriginal economic development opportunities is ongoing and of critical importance. A continuing key focus is the involvement and development of Aboriginal youth in business, training and education initiatives.

As in every year, CANDO has coordinated the nomination and finalist selection process for the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction and the Eagle Feather Award of Distinction.



Council for the Advancement of  
Native Development Officers



# LESSER SLAVE LAKE MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD.

## Overcoming Adversity to Succeed

As the old adage goes, "adversity makes you stronger." Lesser Slave Lake Management Services Ltd. (LSLMS) has seen some major setbacks since it was incorporated in 2003 but has bounced back more vital than ever. Renewal and continuous improvement has been the company's credo throughout the peaks and valleys.



Employees and equipment near Slave Lake

A limited partnership formed by the Driftpile Cree, Kapawe'no, Sawridge, Sucker Creek and Swan River First Nations, LSLMS has a mandate to provide employment and training while promoting cooperation and unity. Preservation of culture and environment is the third key goal of the partnership.

The company operations are concentrated on vegetation control, hazardous tree removal, right-of-way clearing and environmental assessment.

From its inception the corporation suffered several years of near dormancy with little or no revenue generation. Beginning in 2006, it started to right itself through the purchase of a company that had certified workers able to train LSLMS employees. In the process, the company arranged an earned buyout that netted a profit of over \$200,000 after initial outlay. The company was assisted in its rejuvenation by the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council, which also provided the financing necessary to purchase several key pieces of equipment. This brought in contracts and generated a much-needed revenue flow.

A partnership with industry stalwart Atco Electric (a previous Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction winner) developed

employment, training and certification streams. This allowed LSLMS workers to get the training and hours necessary to qualify as utility tree trimmers and utility tree workers. The arrangement was mutually beneficial to both parties and gave the company the boost it needed to be competitive and develop other contracts.

It still wasn't smooth sailing though. Two years ago a fire destroyed a critical piece of company equipment and a major contractor went bankrupt. LSLMS was without the ability to generate expected revenue and unable to collect on nearly \$100,000 worth of completed work.

"For a less determined group that might have been the end of it," said President Roland Twinn. "Both of these events happened right at the start of the international debt crisis. It was touch and go because we'd been through so much. It's a real credit to the partners, our employees and the management team that we persevered and are where we are now."

LSLMS is projecting record revenues and profits this year, in part through a recently signed contract for brush clearing and road building with Pembina Pipeline, but also from its earned reputation for professional work and on-time job completion. Going from zero revenue five years ago to over \$16 million forecast for 2011 is a stellar accomplishment. The revenue increase has injected over one-and-a-half million dollars in wages into the communities, and paid over \$2 million to First Nation entrepreneurs and companies working as sub-contractors.



The Pembina pipeline project

Twenty-six employees now work for LSLMS. Of these, 21 were trained by the company. At peak operating periods the company has employed nearly 100 people. Through careful corporate planning and tax structuring, employees who live on-reserve earn tax-free income.

The company is eager and confident to expand into other business ventures such as hazardous materials remediation and power line construction. LSLMS works closely with First Nation economic development officers to disseminate contracting opportunities, forge partnerships with industry and generate economic prosperity for their communities.

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LSLMS is active at community events, career fairs and other employment/industry trade shows. The company aims to generate employment interest among Aboriginal youth and show what perseverance and planning can do to improve the quality of life in the Slave Lake area. LSLMS is committed to community improvement and will distribute corporate profits equitably among the partners free of restrictions, for this express purpose. After all the trials, the future looks bright for LSLMS and the people it represents and serves.



Office employee Frieda Draney



LSLMS employees with ATV



# COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NATIVE DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

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**CANDO** | Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers

(Continued from page 1)

"We live in an increasingly connected world," said Sacher. "It was apparent that we needed a program that would help Aboriginal youth obtain their Grade 12, and do more as well. This is why Sunchild E-Learning goes beyond secondary senior matriculation to provide preparatory courses for employability enhancement and a smooth entry into post-secondary education streams."



Sunchild E-Learning clients at the Boyle Street Learning Centre in Edmonton

An internationally recognized expert and 30-year veteran of Aboriginal teaching, Sacher uses methods that have won a host of awards and peer recognition. Sacher estimates that in the 10 years since its inception the program has been responsible for more than 50 per cent of all on-reserve high school graduations.

A Conference Board of Canada study examining four years of the Sunchild E-Learning program found a "culture of success" and completion rates over 75 per cent. Tracked over three years the graduation rate was 100 per cent.

Sunchild E-Learning is based on the Alberta Program of Studies but is adapted to encompass individual First Nation cultural and learning needs. The flexibility provided by electronic learning – sites can range from on-reserve schools to individuals homes – is augmented by contractual obligations undertaken by the students, ongoing professional development of contracted instructors and the use of local First Nation mentors. The mentors work individually with students to provide continuous guidance, assistance, technological support and encouragement. Mentors in turn are supported by the band administration, parents, community elders and working professionals.

As a not-for-profit organization, Sunchild E-Learning Community is

partly reliant on funding from an extensive network of corporations that recognize the long-term value of their financial support. By enabling Aboriginal students to advance their education within their home communities through Sunchild's E-Learning program, the corporations reap the benefits in the form of specialized, educated workers equipped with local knowledge and an established presence in area operations.

The program has grown exponentially over the course of its 11 years of operation. It partners with over 13 Aboriginal organizations and has developed working agreements with Alberta Employment and Immigration, the Government of the Northwest Territories (opening a campus in Inuvik), Olds and Red Deer Colleges, DeVry Institute of Technology and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology's Oil Gas Plant Operators Level One and Level Two program.

As well, an agreement with the Alberta Region office of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is being negotiated that would provide linkages at the federal government level.

Sunchild E-Learning Community has been recognized as one of the Top Forty Education Programs in the World by the Oxford/Cambridge 2010 Review: Global Education and Skills, was a Global Best co-award winner for the Americas/Asia and Pacific with Swinburne University in Australia and has been featured in a Time Magazine piece on innovative learning programs.

All the founders, instructors, mentors and particularly the students involved in this innovative educational program should be justifiably proud of their accomplishments in bettering educational advancement in Aboriginal learning.



Mentor William Dominic working with a student at the Conklin site

Please address all letters, comments and requests to:

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Printing – Capital Colour Press  
 Design – MGS Graphics  
 Translation – Translatech

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Published under the authority of the  
 Minister of the Department of Indian  
 and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for  
 Métis and Non-Status Indians  
 Ottawa, 2011  
[wwwainc-inac.gc.ca](http://wwwainc-inac.gc.ca)  
 1-800-567-9604  
 TTY only 1-866-553-0554  
 QS-A023-100-EE-A1  
 ISSN 1923-0494

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 Northern Development, 2011

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre :  
**Entreprise autochtone : célébrée en Alberta**

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Published under the authority of the Minister of the Department of Indian and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians Ottawa, 2011

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca)

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TTY only 1-866-553-0554

QS-A023-100-EE-A1

ISSN 1923-0494

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